

of the U.S.S.R., Azerbaijan once again declared its independence in 1991. The United States recognized Azerbaijan's independence on both occasions.

Azerbaijan has proven to be a key security partner of the United States, providing unwavering support for the NATO mission in Afghanistan dating back to 2002. Azerbaijan also established diplomatic relations with our close ally Israel over 25 years ago and has a small but thriving Jewish community.

Azerbaijan is also a leader in the energy sector. Azerbaijan is spearheading the Southern Gas Corridor which will bring natural gas from the Caspian Sea to our allies in Europe. This diversification of energy supplies will lessen Europe's reliance on Russia. Azerbaijan also provides Israel with 40 percent of its imported energy.

Azerbaijan is a true friend of the United States and I once again commend the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 100th anniversary of its independence.

HONORING J. HAGAN CODELL

HON. ANDY BARR

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a great Kentuckian, Mr. J. Hagan Codell. Mr. Codell is retiring after a successful career as Senior Vice President and Market Leader of Traditional Bank, headquartered in Mt. Sterling, KY.

Prior to his banking career, Mr. Codell worked for Codell Construction Company for 28 years, serving as Vice President. He worked at First National Bank in Jackson, KY as a loan officer then began working at Traditional Bank in 2002. With strong community relations, Mr. Codell has grown the Winchester, KY market in loans, deposits, and a solid customer base. His co-workers describe his leadership style as considerate and selfless.

Mr. Codell is a true community leader. He serves as an elder at First Christian Church, a chairman/director at Cardinal Hill Hospital, a director of the Breathitt County Industrial Board, a director and treasurer of the Jackson-Breathitt County Airport Board, and a director of KY Easter Seals, in addition to other volunteer leadership positions. He is a servant leader who is a role model for others to emulate.

As Hagan Codell reaches the end of his professional career and begins a well-deserved retirement, I join many others in thanking him for his service to his profession and to his community. It is my honor to recognize J. Hagan Codell before the United States House of Representatives.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HAMLET OF LAKE VIEW, NY

HON. CHRIS COLLINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. COLLINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 150th Anniversary

of the hamlet of Lake View in the Town of Hamburg, New York. The history of this hamlet has been shaped by earnest individuals who worked diligently to make Lake View the great place it is today.

The fervor of the railroad era brought prosperity to many communities across the country, especially the hamlet of Lake View. The Lake View rail stop connected the hamlet to many important railways allowing the community to reap the benefits of the businessmen traveling between the cities.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the residents of Lake View on their 150th Anniversary, and thank them for their commitment to the American ideals of prosperity and success.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BETO O'ROURKE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. O'ROURKE. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from the Chamber on Monday May 21, 2018. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on Roll Call votes 207, 208, and 209.

NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN DAY

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, protecting our children is one of the most important things that we can do for society. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed May 25th as National Missing Children's Day. There are very few situations more difficult than when a family member, especially a young child, disappears.

As a former Judge and prosecutor, this is something that I saw first-hand. What do you say to a parent of a missing child? Words are hard to find. 30 years ago, a missing child was akin to a death sentence. A child could be abducted, taken across state lines, and never be seen again. Our best method of locating a missing child was to plaster their images on the sides of milk cartons, encouraging our communities to be on the lookout—a stark reminder of how far we have come.

Last year, in 2017, there were 464,324 children reported as missing in the United States. The statistics paint a grim picture. Of the nearly 25,00 runaways reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, one in seven were likely victims of human trafficking.

As technology has evolved, so has the way in which we search for missing children. With today's technology, the likelihood of finding an abducted child has seen a sharp increase, mostly due to technological advances, social media, and the way in which searches are conducted.

Before the creation of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, there were little or no resources available to assist law enforcement with the cases of missing chil-

dren. In fact, there was no way for police to enter information about missing children into the FBI's national crime computer. Today, thanks to the work of this outstanding organization's work, this is no longer the case. Many children owe their rescue to the center, and many parents are grateful for the return of their kids.

Mr. Speaker, as we observe National Missing Children's Day 2018, it is our duty to ensure that children of this country are protected from those who wish to do them harm.

As we celebrate the good work that the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children does, we pray for those children who have not returned home.

And that's just the way it is.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5515) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2019 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of my amendment to the FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act offered with Representative STEPHANIE MURPHY, which would provide not less than \$12 million for the assessment, monitoring, and evaluation of our defense security cooperation programs as part of the more than \$700 million this bill authorizes for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

Each year, the United States spends as much as \$10 billion on our security cooperation programs.

This includes the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, the Counter-ISIL Fund, the cooperative threat reduction program, and other security programs that help build the capacity of foreign security forces.

The United States trains, educates, advises, and equips our foreign partners all around the world.

However, we have done next to nothing to understand the effectiveness of these programs at accomplishing their goals and advancing U.S. interests.

I commend the Department of Defense for its work to establish an office tasked with creating a monitoring and evaluation framework for security cooperation programs and conducting evaluations.

I am glad the first evaluation will be conducted this year on military logistics in the Baltics.

This amendment will ensure that this good work continues and expands in a manner commensurate with the amount of money we are currently spending on security cooperation programs.

I thank Chairman THORNBERRY, Ranking Member SMITH, Representative MURPHY for working with me on this amendment.

RECOGNIZING THE ST. JOSEPH-
OGDEN GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD
TEAM

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the St. Joseph-Ogden High School girls track and field team, who are the 2018 Illinois High School Association Class 1A state champions.

St. Joseph-Ogden won the title with a score of 43, easily outpacing the second place finisher by seven points. St. Joseph-Ogden benefited from having two event winners, Atleigh Hamilton, who won the long jump event with a mark of 18 feet two inches and the 4x200 Meter Relay team, composed of Abbey Mizer, MacLayne Taylor, Hailey Birt, and Atleigh Hamilton, who won with a time of 1:43.89. Also making important contributions to the overall victory were the 4x100 Meter Relay team of Abbey Mizer, MacLayne Taylor, Hailey Birt, and Atleigh Hamilton with a second place finish; the 4x400 Meter Relay team of MacLayne Taylor, Rylee Sjuts, Zea Maroon, and Atleigh Hamilton, which also finished second; and the 4x800 Meter Relay team of Rylee Sjuts, Zea Maroon, Hannah Rajlich, and Sam Mabry, which took third place.

Mr. Speaker, today it is an honor for me to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the St. Joseph-Ogden High School girls track and field team in winning the 2018 championship, and I wish the team and their coach, Kelly Steffen, all the best in the future.

IN RECOGNITION OF PROVIDENCE
VILLAGE HEROES PARK

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Heroes Park in Providence Village, Texas. Heroes Park, which will be dedicated on Memorial Day of this year, seeks to honor the selfless acts of men and women in uniform, first responders, and other unsung heroes. Today I would like to thank the Providence Village Hope Foundation for its work to establish this park and support our community's men and women in uniform.

Each Memorial Day, we remember the brave members of our Armed Services who put their service to our nation first. While Heroes Park is a physical tribute to them, our gratitude and respect extends far beyond the confines of its land.

I am grateful to join Providence Village Mayor Michael Jordan and Providence Village Hope Foundation Founders Eric and Karen Mattson to dedicate this beautiful park, and pay tribute to North Texas service members past and present.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MR.
THOMAS ESTILL REFFITT

HON. ANDY BARR

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Thomas Estill Reffitt of Bath County, Kentucky. Mr. Reffitt is a distinguished veteran of World War II.

Mr. Reffitt was born September 20, 1924 to Samuel and Lillie Reffitt. He served in the United States Navy for four years as a Fireman 1st Class. He was stationed in the Gilbert Islands. Mr. Reffitt was honorably discharged March 4, 1946.

Mr. Reffitt returned home and worked as a truck driver and a farmer. At the present time, he is under hospice care at the Leestown Road Veteran's Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky.

Mr. Reffitt and all the brave men and women of the Greatest Generation are true heroes. Their bravery and their sacrifice preserved freedoms for ourselves and for future generations of Americans and for people around the world.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5515) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2019 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Chair, I will vote against H.R. 5515, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019.

The legislation includes several provisions that I strongly support, including giving servicemen and women a well-deserved raise of 2.6 percent. Those who serve in uniform have made extraordinary sacrifices for our country and have earned and deserve a pay raise. It also includes funding for Ukraine and Eastern Europe security initiatives to counter Russia's heightened military provocations and annexation of Crimea.

Despite these important initiatives, I have strong concerns with H.R. 5515. This legislation authorizes more than \$708 billion, including \$69 billion to the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund, an account which is not counted in the budget and is not paid for. It adds to the deficit and is used as a slush fund by the Pentagon.

Unlike every other federal agency, the Department of Defense (DOD) has yet to complete a financial audit; taxpayers deserve to know how the biggest bureaucracy in the federal government spends their money. In fact, a shocking report released in December 2016 exposed \$125 billion in waste that the Pentagon tried to hide from the public.

I refuse to support increased bureaucratic waste at the expense of American taxpayers

and our men and women in uniform. A more accountable and transparent department would ensure taxpayer dollars are directed towards the needs of our troops and the benefits they deserve, rather than buying unnecessary weapon systems and giving the president a blank check to fund wars Congress hasn't authorized.

I have always advocated for maintaining Congress's constitutionally-continued prerogative to declare war under the War Powers Act and limiting the President's authority to engage in armed conflict without the consent of Congress. I strongly oppose the NDAA's continued authorization of spending for wars that are not congressionally approved. The Pentagon uses the 2001 Authorization of Use of Military Force (AUMF) to continue to justify the 17 years our troops have been fighting in the Middle East. President Trump has already sent troops to Syria, Yemen and elsewhere without seeking a new AUMF, a violation of the War Powers Act.

Additionally, the bill prohibits the closing of Guantanamo Bay, which costs more than \$100 million each year to house 41 prisoners and has been used as a top recruiting tool by terrorists. The prison at Guantanamo Bay has been a black eye for the United States, has eroded relationships with our allies, undermined U.S. missions abroad, and put U.S. citizens and our troops at risk of retaliation.

Congress can make responsible cuts to our defense budget without jeopardizing the safety of our troops or undermining our national security. Fiscal responsibility and accountability at the Pentagon would allow for funds to be better spent supporting the basic needs of our troops, meeting our obligations to veterans of past wars, and ensuring our true defense needs are prioritized.

HONORING MRS. EVELYN HICKS

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to honor Mrs. Evelyn Hicks of Winston County, Alabama. Mrs. Hicks is retiring from managing her local school cafeteria at Lynn School in Lynn, Alabama which is located in the Fourth Congressional District that I represent. I am honored to recognize Mrs. Hicks for her dedication to ensuring our children have nutritious and edible food. It should also be noted that she was honored on May 23, 2018 at Lynn School with a reception for her many years of service.

Mrs. Evelyn Hicks was born in my home county of Winston to Truman and Alice Baughn. She is a graduate of Lynn School and has been a member of Concord Missionary Baptist Church for 57 years. She has been married to Roy Hicks for 52 years. They have two daughters and four grandchildren. Mrs. Hicks also served on the Winston County Board of Education from 2000 to 2004.

Mrs. Hicks also played a major role in providing my office with "on the ground" feedback into how school lunch restrictions were having a negative effect on her job of feeding children. Because of Mrs. Hicks's assistance, we have been able to roll back many of the harmful restrictions and provide solutions that give